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SPANISH AND MEXICAN EXPLORATION AND TRADE NORTHWEST FROM NEW MEXICO INTO THE GREAT BASIN

1765—1853¹

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The Old Spanish Trail. The present article deals with the opening of and travel over the Old Spanish Trail, not to California, as is the common thought in connection with that trail, but rather to the Great Basin. The Old Spanish Trail, properly so-called, led to the Great Basin, only. It was developed as a result of the Spanish trade with the Yutas. This trade began with the first exploration in that direction, the Rivera expedition of 1765, and continued until after the country was settled by whites. It was not until the winter of 1830-1831, when Wolfskill led a party to California by this northern trail, that the Old Spanish Trail was thought of as extending to California. But Wolfskill was an American and he led an American expedition. The misnomer, however, was of perfectly normal development. Parties going to California by this northern route set out from New Mexico along the Old Spanish Trail to the Great Basin, and so it was perfectly natural to speak of their having gone to California by way of the Old Spanish Trail. The term, therefore, soon became applied not only to the trail leading to the Great Basin but also to the branch of that trail leading to California. The branch to California soon became the more important part of the trail and as a result the original meaning of the term has been forgotten. It is the writer's purpose, however, in the present article to consider the Spanish and Mexican travel and trade along the Old Spanish Trail which led to the Great Basin.

The Rivera Expedition to the Gunnison River, 1765. Possibly the first expedition of white men northwest from New Mex-

¹ The following article is but a chapter in the history of the fur trade of the Far Southwest—a subject on which the writer has spent considerable time during the last few years and on which he now has a volume about ready for the press.

ico as far as the La Plata Mountains of today was the one led by Juan María de Rivera by order of Tomás Vélez Cachupín, governor of New Mexico, in the year 1765.² Although Rivera's journal of the expedition has been lost, its contents are partly known to us by its having been known and used by Domínguez and Escalante, who seem to have followed it more or less closely as a guide on their expedition in 1776, referring here and there in their diary to places described by Rivera.

By this means we are able to trace the general course of Rivera's route from Santa Fé northwest to the San Juan River (possibly named in honor of Rivera) and across the southern spur of the La Plata Mountains, which seem to have been prospected to some extent and given their present name because of the finding in them of what appeared to be silver ore.³ Continuing northwest the party descended either the Dolores or San Miguel River⁴ (probably the Dolores) and, turning to the northeast, crossed the Uncompahgre Plateau and descended the

² The date of the Rivera expedition, according to the printed copy of the *Diario y derrotero* of Escalante is 1761 (*Documentos para la historia de Mexico*, sér. 2, tomo 1, Mexico, 1854, p. 409). Escalante also speaks of the region's having been explored under the orders of Tomás Vélez Cachupín, governor of New Mexico, but without giving any date of the expedition (*ibid.*, p. 389). If these statements are both correct it would mean that there were two official expeditions over this territory within at least a few years of each other, since the date, 1761, falls between the dates of the two administrations of Vélez (1749-1754 and 1762-1767). This of course is not impossible, but it suggests the question of error in the date of the Rivera expedition. As a further indication of the possibility of such an error, Cesáreo Fernández Duro, on the authority of a manuscript copy of the Escalante diary in the Real Academia de la Historia, dates the Rivera expedition in the year 1765 (Cesáreo Fernández Duro, *Don Diego de Penalosa y su descubrimiento del reino de Quivira*, Madrid, 1882, pp. 139, 142). Philip Harry also gives 1765 as the date of the expedition in his summary of the Escalante narrative based upon a manuscript copy then in the possession of Peter Force, now in the Library of Congress, and which apparently had been copied from what was regarded as the original in the archives of the city of Mexico (J. H. Simpson, *Report of explorations across the Great Basin*, 1859, Washington, 1876, p. 490). I have adopted this date because it seems to fit the general situation better than the other one does. Since writing the above note, a copy of the Escalante journal, made from a copy in the Seville archives, has been received in the Bancroft Library. In this copy the date of the Rivera expedition is given as 1765.

³ *Doc. para la hist. de Mex.*, ut supra, p. 389. See also Juan Bautista de Anza, *Diario* in *Doc. para la hist. de Nuevo Mexico*, II 874—Ms. in the Bancroft Library.

⁴ While on the San Miguel, Escalante noted going down the same precipitous trail described by Rivera in his journal (*Doc. para la hist. de Mex.*, ut supra, p. 401. Cf. W. R. Harris, *The Catholic Church in Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1909) p. 140.

Uncompahgre River to the Gunnison.⁵ Here, after sending two of his men across the river in search of Yutas, Rivera began his return journey, presumably retracing his previous route.

Private trading expeditions among the Yutas, 1765-1776. Although no other official expeditions are known to have been made into that section for more than a decade, private individuals, among whom were members of Rivera's party, began to look with interest upon the region just explored. Thus began a movement which was to last more than three-quarters of a century. It is a movement, however, that is most difficult to follow because, unlike official expeditions, there were no records kept of these private ventures. In fact, owing to governmental restrictions on Indian trading it was frequently to the advantage of the persons concerned to cover up all trace of their activities. It is only by occasional, incidental references, therefore, that one is able to get a glimpse of what seems to have been happening more or less continuously during this entire period.

The first definite reference that we have to any of these private enterprises is the statement made by Escalante concerning the expedition of Pedro Mora, Gregorio Sandoval, and Andrés Muñiz, who went as far as the Gunnison in the year 1775 where at the mouth of the Uncompahgre they examined the young cottonwood on which Rivera had cut a cross, together with the initials of his name and the year in which he was there.⁶ All three had accompanied Rivera in 1765 and may have been on

⁵ It was while in about this location eleven years later that Escalante recorded: "There came to these two rivers in the year 1765 Don Juan María de Rivera, crossing the same **sierra de los Tabehuachis**, on the summit of which is the place that he named **El Purgatorio**, according to the description that he gives in his journal. The plain on which he camped for the purpose of fording the river and on which he says he cut a cross in a young cottonwood, together with the initials of his name and the year of the expedition, are still found at the junction of these rivers on the southern bank, as we were informed by our interpreter Andrés Muñiz, who came with the said Don Juan María the year referred to, as far as the Tabehuachis Mountains, saying that although he had remained behind three day's journey before reaching the river, he had come the past year, 1775, along the bank of the river with Pedro Mora and Gregorio Sandoval who had accompanied Don Juan María through the whole of his expedition. They said that they had come as far as the river at that time, and from that point they had begun their return journey; only two persons having crossed the river, being sent by Don Juan María to look for Yutas on the bank opposite the plain on which they were camping, and from which they returned." (**Doc. para la hist. de Mex., ut supra, pp. 409-410.** Translation by the writer. Cf. Harris, *The Catholic Church in Utah*, p. 146).

⁶ **Doc. para la hist. de Mex., ut supra, p. 410.**

other expeditions into that region in the intervening decade, but of such activities we have as yet no specific record.

That there were other expeditions such as this, however, is evidenced by statements in Escalante's diary. That document states that while among the Sabuaganas (who lived on the head waters of the North Fork of the Gunnison) the interpreter had misinterpreted a certain portion of the padre's speech either for the purpose of not offending the Indians, or in order that he might not lose their good will, which he had gained by traffic in pelts, which the document adds, the Spaniards frequently carried on with those Indians even in violation of the prohibition of the governors of the kingdom.⁷ It further refers to the apparently rather common custom which the Spaniards had of going to the Yutas and remaining there for a great while—two, three, and four months at a time for the purpose of obtaining pelts.⁸

By the time of the Domínguez-Escalante expedition (1776) the region east of the Colorado and as far north as the Gunnison seems to have been fairly well known to the Spaniards of New Mexico. This is clear from the fact that most of the more important physical features of the country were referred to in the diary of Escalante by names that are still on the map, and in a way that would lead one to think that those names were in more or less common use at that time. It was also definitely stated by Nicloás de la Fora who accompanied the Marqués de Rubí on his tour of inspection through the northern provinces in 1766-1767 that the country to the north along the **Cordillera de las Grullas**⁹ was at that time known to the Spaniards for a hundred leagues above New Mexico.¹⁰

Demand for overland communication between New Mexico and California. So far the movement might be considered purely

⁷ Ibid., p. 518.

⁸ Ibid., p. 519.

⁹La Sierra de las Grullas (sometimes written La Grulla) was the name applied to that spur of the Rocky Mountains beginning in the vicinity of Marshall Pass at the northern end of San Luis Valley and running towards the southwest for about one hundred and twenty-five miles to the La Plata Mountains of today, thus forming the western boundary of San Luis Valley and serving as the divide between the waters of that valley and those of the Colorado River. For a description of these mountains by Domínguez and Escalante see *Doc. para la hist. de Mex.*, ut supra, p. 407 and passim.

¹⁰Relacion del viaje de orden del Excelentísimo Señor Virrey Marquez de Cruillas hizo El Capitan de Ingenieros Dn Nicolás de la Fora, en compañía del Mariscal de Campo Marquez de Rubí, Comissionado por Su Magestad, a la revista de los presidios internos, situados en la frontera de la parte de la America septentrional perteneciente al Rey. Ms. transcript in Bolton Collection (original in Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico).

local in character. But at this point it takes on a broader aspect. Urged on by the Russian advance down the Pacific coast, Spain had colonized Alta California. The first expeditions had been by water. But the need for an overland route was keenly felt both as a means of protection and as an economic saving in transportation. From Sonora, Anza had led a party to California in 1774 and another in 1775-76. But the route was far from satisfactory. Even if the Colorado desert had proved less formidable there would still have been the desire of opening a direct road between New Mexico and California if that should prove possible.

The Domínguez-Escalante expedition to the Great Basin, 1776. For this purpose, coupled with the desire of becoming acquainted with the Indians to the north and northwest and of exploring their country with the view to establishing missions, a company was organized under the leadership of two Franciscan friars—Francisco Athanasio Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante.¹¹

In addition to the two fathers the party consisted of the following members: Juan Pedro Cisneros, **alcalde mayor** of the pueblo of Zuñi; Bernardo Miera y Pacheco, a retired captain and citizen of Santa Fé;¹² Joaquín Laín, a citizen of Santa Fé; Lorenzo de Olivares of the pueblo El Paso del Norte; the interpreter and guide Andrés Muñiz of Bernalillo, who had been a member of the Rivera expedition of 1765; his brother Antonio Lucrecio Muñiz of Embudo; Juan de Aguilar of Bernalillo; and Simón Luzero, a servant of Cisneros.¹³

¹¹The official title given Domínguez was "Comisario visitador de esta custodia de la conversion de San Pablo del Nuevo Mexico." Very little is known of his previous or later life. Escalante, whose name really should be written Vélez de Escalante except for the fact that he is so much better known simply as Escalante, was "Ministro doctrinero de la mision de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Zuñi." This position he occupied from 1774 to 1778. His various letters and reports during this period indicate that he was actively interested in opening a road between New Mexico and Alta California. In April, 1778, at the request of Father Morfi, he wrote an historical account of New Mexico. Very little is known of his later activities.

¹²There is some suggestion that the expedition was actually under the command of Miera y Pacheco. Escalante, writing on the day that the party set out, says that he had recommended Miera as a useful member of the party "no para comandar la expedicion sino para construir un mapa del Terreno que se andubiesse" (letter to Fr. Ysidro Murillo, in P. Otto Maas, *Viages de misioneros franciscanos á la conquista del Nuevo Mexico*, Sevilla, 1915, p. 89).

¹³The chief source of information concerning the expedition is the diary signed by Dominguez and Escalante, but which seems to have been written by Escalante. Manuscript copies of this diary can be found in the Archivo General, Mexico (Bolton, *Guide to materials for the history*

Leaving Santa Fé July 29, 1776, the company, ten in number, directed its course northwest through the little town of Santa Clara on the Rio del Norte, and Abiquiú on the Chama, across Rio Cebolla and Rio Nutrias to the Chama at about the point of the present El Vado.¹⁴ On August 5, they arrived at the Navajó River where it turns from the southwest to the northwest about three leagues before it enters the San Juan. Passing on, the company camped three leagues below the junction of the two rivers near the present town of Caracas, naming the place Nuestra Señora de las Nieves. Continuing to the northwest they crossed Rio Piedra, Rio Los Pinos, Rio Florida, Rio Las Ánimas, Rio La Plata (also mentioned by the name of San Joaquín), and Rio Mancos (which they also called San Lázaro).

On August 12, they arrived at Rio Dolores at the place where it turns from the southwest to the northwest near the present city of Hogg. From here they followed the general downward course of the river but usually at some distance to the west of it. Upon touching it on the 17th, somewhere in the vicinity of Dis-

of the United States in the principal archives of Mexico, pp. 28, 39); the Archivo General de Indias, Seville (Chapman, *Catalogue of materials in the Archivo General de Indias for the history of the Pacific coast and the American Southwest*, p. 425); and in the British Museum (Pascual de Gayangos y Arce, *Catalogue of the manuscripts in the Spanish language in the British Museum*, p. 412). The first printed edition is that published as a part of *Documentos para la historia de Mexico* (sér. 2, tomo 1, pp. 375-558) Mexico, 1854. Recently P. Otto Maas published a portion of the journal from a manuscript copy in the Archivo General de Indias, in his *Viages de misioneros franciscanos á la conquista del Nuevo Mexico* (Sevilla, 1915), but unfortunately there is only a portion of the return trip included in this publication. Rev. W. R. Harris, in *The Catholic Church in Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1909), printed a translation of the diary. It is so poorly done, however, that the work is practically worthless. Such mistakes as the following occur frequently: **Septentrional** is rendered "southern"; **ochenta**, "eight"; **de**, "to"; **o**, "and." Also, entire phrases which are essential to the meaning of the context are frequently omitted altogether, and there is a complete confusion as regards directions.

¹⁴ Harris concludes that they crossed the Chama River at about the present site of Chama on the Denver and Rio Grande railroad and from there followed the present route of the railroad west. This however, seems improbable from the fact that they reached the Chama after traveling only three leagues from the Nutrias and at a point where the river was said to run to the south and from which point it turned to the east (**de oeste**). To the west they were told there were two lakes. Stinking Lake is directly west of El Vado and Boulder Lake is about six miles to the north. In going about four leagues to the northwest and north from their crossing they passed an opening in the mountains "in which is another lake." Boulder Lake satisfies this condition if the party crossed the Chama in the vicinity of El Vado (The Ford).

appointment Creek, they discovered recent signs of Yuta Indians whom, however, they were unable to locate.

An effort was now made to find a road leading to the west but after searching a day and a half nothing was discovered but a trail to the southwest which was seen to be soon obstructed by table-lands and cañons. A council was then held in which each member of the party disagreed with each of the others as to the direction that should be taken. With this feeling of uncertainty prevailing, they finally decided to follow the trail to the Yutas and there endeavor to obtain a guide. Leaving the Dolores they pursued a northeasterly course crossing the San Miguel River, which they called Rio San Pedro,¹⁵ and the Uncompahgre Plateau, which they referred to as the **Sierra de los Tabehuachis**, and finally on the 26th of August, "entered the pleasant valley and river of San Francisco, called by the Yutas the Ancapagari." From about thirty miles from the junction of the Uncompahgre with the Gunnison they descended to within about ten miles of the mouth of the Uncompahgre when they turned north to the Gunnison, which they named San Xavier and which they said the Indians called the Tomichi.^{15a} Going up the Gunnison and the North Fork of the Gunnison they came to the villages of the Sabuaganas Yutas. Here they met some Timpangotzis or Laguna Indians¹⁶ "to whose country," the journal significantly states, "we were already intending to go."¹⁷

Thus far their course had led over territory fairly well known. The interpreter, Andrés Muñiz, had been over most of it at least twice before, and probably other members of the party had also been over part of it. But from now on their route was to lead them into territory apparently never before explored by white men.

Having secured the services of two Lagunas as guides, the party set out on September 2, intent on finding the home of the Lagunas. Going generally to the northwest they crossed the Grand and White rivers and, on September 13, arrived at the banks of Green River (called by them **San Buenaventura**) near the mouth of Brush Creek a little above the present site of Jensen, Utah. Crossing the river they directed their course to

¹⁵ The San Miguel is the first river to be referred to by a different name than that by which it is known today.

^{15a} One of the main branches of the Gunnison is still known by its Indian name—the Tomichi.

¹⁶ Perhaps more commonly referred to at present as Timpanogos. Listed by Hodge in his **Handbook** (II, 751) under the name Timpaiavats.

¹⁷ "A cuya tierra intentábamos ya pasar." **Doc. para la hist. de Mex.**, sér. 2, tomo I, p. 411.

the southwest until they arrived at the junction of the Uintah and Duchesne rivers. Going up the Duchesne and Strawberry rivers and crossing the summit they seem to have descended along Diamond Creek and Spanish Fork River to the settlements of the Timpanogos on the eastern shores of Utah Lake, where they arrived September 23, 1776.¹⁸

Of this region—its geography, inhabitants, and possibilities of development—the padres speak in considerable detail. They mention four rivers which flow into the lake, the first of which beginning at the south, was Aguascalientes on account of the hot springs that had been observed while descending it. This was Spanish Fork River, down which the party had just come. The second, three leagues to the north, was named San Nicolás, and corresponds fairly well to Hobbie Creek except for the statement in the diary that it contains more water than the first one, which is hardly the case. However, they seem to have left the Aguascalientes shortly after it entered the open plain and to have struck the San Nicolás farther down in the valley, which would make it appear relatively larger than if compared with the Aguascalientes at the same distance from the mountains. Three and a half leagues farther to the northwest was the third river, containing more water than the other two. This they named San Antonio de Padua. It is clearly the present Provo River. To the northwest they could see a fourth river which they were told carried as much water as the others. They named this the Rio de Santa Ana, but did not visit it. It was, evidently, the American Fork River of today.¹⁹

¹⁸ There seems to be considerable disagreement as to the route followed by the party after leaving the summit. Bancroft has them coming down the Provo River which he imagines they called the Purisima. As a matter of fact the river they called the Purisima was on the east of the summit and, according to the diary, runs to the southeast (sueste). The company crossed it on September 21 and then climbed to the summit and, on the 23d, descended a stream running to the southwest which turned to the west as it joined another small stream. Just below the junction of the two were a number of hot springs which suggested the name of Aguascalientes for the river. They continued down the Aguascalientes to the open plain and then northwest six and a half leagues to the Indian villages. These various details and the daily routes traveled and the directions of the rivers seem to indicate that they came down Diamond Creek to its junction with Spanish Fork River and then on down that stream. The Castilla Hot Springs just below the mouth of Diamond Creek seem to make this conclusion imperative.

¹⁹ Bancroft identifies the four rivers flowing into the lake as follows: "Their Aguascalientes," he says, "is Currant Creek; the second, their San Nicolás though more than three leagues from the first, and not corresponding in every other particular, is the Spanish Fork River; the San Antonio de Padua is the Provo; and the Santa Ana, the River Jordan" (*History of Utah*, p. 14). But the diary distinctly states that

The valleys of these rivers, it was said, contained widespread meadows of rich irrigable land with plenty of water for irrigation so that there might be established in the region as many pueblos of Indians as there were in New Mexico.

The Indians were said to be good featured. They spoke the Yuta language but with a noticeable variation of accent. They were docile, living principally upon fish, rabbits, wild fowls, seeds, and herbs. They were but poorly clothed; their most decent dress being a shirt or jacket of buckskin with moccasins and leggings of the same material. For cold weather they had blankets made of rabbit skins. Their dwellings were huts made of willow brush.

The Spaniards were told of a larger lake of salt water to the north with which this one connected, but they did not visit it. Obviously, this was Great Salt Lake.

After spending three days visiting the tribes on the eastern shore of the lake as far north as Provo River, the party resumed its journey towards Monterey. Taking a course south-south-west they arrived on the 29th, unexpectedly, on the banks of the Sevier River, named by them the Santa Isabel. Here they made special note of meeting Indians having extra thick beards—"much thicker," they said, "than those of the Lagunas"—by which circumstance these Indians were said to be differentiated from all others hitherto known.²⁰ From the statement that the territory of these bearded Indians began at the Santa Isabel (Sevier) River it is possible to trace more definitely the routes of later expeditions which refer to these Indians as the Bearded Yutas.

Crossing the Santa Isabel (Sevier) River near the site of the present town of Mills they traveled south about five leagues and then west until they again reached the Sevier in the vicinity of

the party entered the valley along the Aguascalientes. How they could have done this if Currant Creek were the Aguascalientes Bancroft does not explain. Furthermore Spanish Fork is at too great a distance from Currant Creek to be the San Nicolás if Currant Creek be the Aguascalientes and Provo River is too far from the Spanish Fork to be the third if the Spanish Fork be the second. Also looking to the northwest from Provo River the company certainly would have seen the American Fork instead of the Jordan. Moreover, they regarded all four as flowing into the lake whereas the Jordan flows out of it. Harris identifies the four rivers as follows: The Aguascalientes was the Spanish Fork; the San Nicolás, the Provo; the San Antonio de Padua, the American Fork; and the Santa Ana, the Jordan (*The Catholic Church in Utah*, p. 248). The objection to this arrangement is the fact that the Provo is at too great a distance from the Spanish Fork, Hobbie Creek is ignored, and the Jordan flows in the wrong direction.

²⁰Doc, para la hist. de Mex., sér. 2, tomo 1, pp. 473, 476.

the present Oasis and Deseret. Here they turned to the southwest, taking the course at present followed by the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad through the valley of Beaver River.

On October 5, when in the vicinity of the present town of Blackrock, their Laguna guide, whom they had secured before leaving Utah Lake, left them after a quarrel with members of the party. To add to their difficulties, a heavy snow storm set in, which brought very forcibly to their minds the nearness of the approaching winter. Being snowbound and out of provisions, on October 8, they recorded: "The winter had now set in with great rigor, and all the mountain ranges that we could see were covered with snow." They began to realize that long before they could reach Monterey the mountain passes would be closed, and they feared that they would be obliged to remain some two or three months on some mountain where they would be unable to provide themselves with the necessary food to sustain life. Under these conditions it was finally decided to give up the project and return to Santa Fé by way of the Cosnina, Moqui, and Zuñi Indians. It was hoped that in this way a better road might be discovered by a more southern route.

But without a guide the return trip was no simple matter. Directing their course to the south through Cedar Valley, down Ash Creek, and across the Virgin River they soon reached the high tablelands of the cañon of the Colorado. For a month they wandered over extremely difficult trails seeking a crossing of the great river. Finally after much tribulation, the river was crossed, November 7, at a point about thirty miles below the mouth of the San Juan just north of the Utah-Arizona line. Concerning the crossing, which has subsequently been known as the Crossing of the Fathers, the record says: "The ford of this river is very good; it is a little more than a mile wide at this point and here the Navajo and Dolores come incorporated with all others that we have mentioned in this diary as flowing into either of them."²¹

The effort was now made to find the Cosnina Indian villages, which, however, were discovered to be empty when they were finally reached on November 14—the Indians apparently being away in search of pine-nuts in the adjacent mountains. On the 16th the party arrived at the town of Oraybi, one of the Moqui villages. The Moquis both here and at the towns of Xongopabi, Mossanganabi, and Gualpi were willing to supply the Spaniards with provisions and help them on their way but were not willing to treat with them on other matters, saying that they wished to be friends with the Spaniards but not Christian.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 535.

Leaving the Moqui towns on November 20, the priests with three companions hurried on to the Zuñi settlements leaving the rest of the company to follow more leisurely with the weaker animals.²² After two or three weeks stay at Zuñi they continued their journey, passing through San Estéban de Ácoma, San José de la Laguna, Alamo, San Agustín de la Isleta, San Francisco de Albuquerque, Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Sandía, Santo Domingo,²³ and, finally, on January 2, 1777, arrived at the city of Santa Fé.

So far as opening a road to California was concerned the Domínguez-Escalante expedition was a failure. But by means of it a large portion of the interior of North America was explored for the first time by white men, the Great Basin was visited and, the Indian tribes about Utah Lake and the Sevier River were made friends of the Spaniards.

When at the Timpanogos settlements, Domínguez and Escalante had promised to return the following year and establish a mission. Indeed this was given as one of the reasons for not going on to Monterey, as that would delay the establishment of the mission too long.²⁴ But it seems that the priests were unable to convince the authorities of the necessity of such a move, and so the promise was not fulfilled. No mission was established in the Great Basin, but, as we shall see later, Spaniards from New Mexico continued to visit that region for the purpose of trading with the Indians.

Anza's expedition through the San Luis Valley, 1779. Up to this time travel north from New Mexico and west of the continental divide seems to have taken a northwesterly route around the southern spur of the La Plata Mountains and then northeasterly along the western slope of those mountains to the Gunnison River.²⁵ So far as is known no white man had passed

²²At Zuñi the priests forwarded a report of their travels to Governor Pedro Fermín de Mendiúeta. See Bolton, **Guide**, p. 37, and Chapman, **Catalogue**, p. 434.

²³All the stops between Zuñi and Santa Fé were referred to as missions except Álamó.

²⁴**Doc. para la hist. de Mex.**, sér. 2, tomo 1, p. 484.

²⁵East of the continental divide there had been a number of expeditions north from New Mexico previous to this time. In 1706, Juan de Uribarri led a company over the mountains from Taos, and north along the eastern foothills through Jicarilla, thence north and east to El Cuartelejo in what is now southeastern Colorado. In 1719 Valverde, governor of New Mexico, led an expedition over very much the same ground except that he did not go as far east as El Cuartelejo. And in 1720 the fateful Villasur expedition made its way along the eastern foothills to the South Platte and thence to its junction with the North Fork.

through the San Lu s Valley until Juan Bautista de Anza led an expedition there in 1779.²⁶

The occasion for this expedition was Indian disturbances. The Comanches had been especially troublesome for some time. One of their chiefs, Cuerno Verde (Green Horn), whose father had been killed in an encounter with the Spaniards, had taken it upon himself to avenge his father's death. He had led numerous attacks against the Spaniards, "killing hundreds and taking many prisoners whom he afterwards sacrificed in cold blood." In an effort to quell these disturbances Anza, who had recently been made governor of New Mexico, organized an expedition against the Comanches. In making his attack he says that he selected a different route from that by which all previous expeditions against the Comanches had been made in order that he might not be discovered long before reaching the country inhabited by the enemy as had been the case with all former operations against them.

With an army of 645 men he set out from Santa F  on the 15th of August, 1779. Following the Camino Real to the northwest and north, they passed through San Juan, crossed the Rio del Norte, and continued to Ojo Caliente, some seven leagues from their crossing, where the Camino Real ended. Between Ojo Caliente and their next crossing of the Rio del Norte the diary mentions passing the following six streams: Las Nutrias (Nutritas), San Antonio, Conejos, Las Jaras (La Jara), Los Timbres (Rio Alamosa), and San Lorenzo (Piedra Pintada Creek).

While on the Rio del Norte, Anza took occasion to record a few items that throw light on the geographic information of the time. He says, "This river, as is known, empties into the North Sea and Bay of Esp ritu Santo. It has its own source fifteen leagues or a little more from this place in the Sierra de la Grulla which is the same one on the skirts of which we have traveled since the 17th . . ."²⁷ The Yuta nation accompanying me,²⁸ who reside at the said source, and three civilians who have explored it, tell me that it proceeds from the interior of a great swamp, which is formed . . . by the constant melting of the snow on some mountain peaks that are very near it.

²⁶ Our authority for this expedition is Anza's diary **Ms.** in the Archivo General de Mexico, Secci n de Historia, Tomo XXV, no. 36, a copy of which is in the Bancroft Library (**Doc. para la historia de Nuevo Mexico**, II, 861-922).

²⁷ For a description of La Sierra de la Grulla (sometimes called La Sierra de las Grullas) see above, note 9.

²⁸ On August 20, while on Rio Conejos, two hundred Yutas and Apaches had joined the expedition.

"The same persons tell me that after crossing fifteen leagues breadth of the land seven rivers come for very short distances, and after uniting they form one of considerable size which flows to the west. This river . . . I judge to be the river called Colorado, which, after uniting with the Gila, empties into the Gulf of California, where, among the nations which live on it and with whom I have communicated in my journeys there, I have received information quite circumstantial of the Yuta nation from which I infer that the two are not far distant from each other."²⁹ Anza further said that the three civilians mentioned above explored the said seven rivers by order of Governor Don Tomás Vélez. They were, therefore, probably members of the Rivera party.

From the Rio Grande del Norte the company proceeded north through the San Luís valley,³⁰ and then crossed the mountains to the head waters of the Arkansas River, where, by coming upon the Comanches from the north Anza was able to surprise and defeat them. The location is still recorded in the name of Greenhorn (Cuerno Verde) Mountains. He then recrossed the divide³¹ and continued south along the foothills to Taos and Santa Fé.

²⁹Doc. para la historia de Nuevo Mexico, II, 872.

³⁰ It is difficult to trace the exact route of the expedition through the San Luis Valley. Judging from the course pursued from the time the company crossed the Rio del Norte near San Juan until they reached it again at the point they named El Paso de San Bartolomé, the latter place must have been in the vicinity of the present Del Norte. From San Bartolomé the journal states that they traveled four leagues to the north and then four to the north-north-west when they arrived at a beautiful lake (ciénaga) which they named San Luís. If the present San Luís lake is meant the direction traveled must be inaccurate. Furthermore, there is no place on the Rio del Norte from which they could have reached the San Luís lake after traveling the given distance and directions. There seems to be a mistake in the direction given. San Luís lake is about due east from where they must have crossed the river. But notwithstanding the confusion at this point, it is perfectly clear that they proceeded north until the mountains on the west (La Grulla) and the ones on the east (Sierra Almagre) approach each other so closely that there is nothing but cañon between them. It was here that the crossing was made to the waters of the Napeste (Arkansas).

³¹ There is confusion again at this point. The diary states that they reached the arroyo of La Sangre de Cristo on September 3, and that they crossed the divide the following day and at the foot of the mountains arrived at the place of the lake (al sitio de la ciénaga). It seems that they must have called one of the tributaries of Huérfino River the arroyo of La Sangre de Cristo and that they must have crossed the mountains by either the Sand Hill or Mosca Pass and not by the pass known as the Sangre de Cristo Pass today as would naturally be supposed from reading the diary.

This was the last official expedition north or northwest of New Mexico during the period in which Spain held control, of which we have any record. The reason for this apparent lack of interest in the region may not be difficult to understand when one looks at the activities of Spain as a whole. The strained European conditions, the war with England which directed attention to the Mississippi valley and the Atlantic coast, and the increasing demand for protection of California and the Pacific northwest gave little time for further exploration of the Rocky Mountain region. The fact, also, that no important pueblos had been found tended to cool the ardor for governmental activity.

Spanish traders in the Great Basin. But the Indian trader usually knew or cared little about international affairs. Nor was he dismayed by not finding Indian pueblos. He was frequently of that type of individual who cared little for settled life and was just as much at home with a tribe of roving Indians as in the more highly civilized pueblos. To him the Yutas along the tributaries of the Colorado and in the Great Basin offered opportunities for both a life and living which were highly suitable to his inclinations. As we have already seen, at least as early as the time of Domínguez and Escalante, traders were in the habit of visiting the Yutas and staying with them for months at a time for the purpose of gathering peltries. That these activities continued, there can be but little doubt, although, for the next twenty-five years or so we have slender data on which to make any very definite statements. At the end of that time, however, there are a few documents which enable us to pick up the thread again.

On September 1, 1805, Joaquín de Real Alencaster who had but recently become governor of New Mexico, in writing to the commandant-general on the merits of a Yuta interpreter says: "Manuel Mestas, a Genizaro, seventy years old, who for approximately fifty years has served as Yuta interpreter, was the one who reduced them to peace." Further in recounting Mestas' virtues Alencaster says "In the short time that I have governed this province, he has recovered from the aforesaid heathen eight horses which he himself search for and brought back. In the month of July he went back to the country of the aforesaid people and not only succeeded in bringing back eleven mules and horses, but, according to the report of other Yutas, called Jimpipas,^{31a} shortly started out on a trip of about a month's duration for the purpose of retaking, not only the aforesaid eleven animals, but also twenty mules and eight horses, which

^{31a}It is not clear who the Jimpipas were. I am not even certain that the spelling is accurate as the Spanish text is very difficult at this point.

among other things, had been stolen from men of this province last year in the country of the said Jimpipas, by Comanches, and were retaken by the Yutas Timpanogos during a war with the aforesaid Comanches."

It seems from this that Mestas had set out for the land of the Timpanogos for the purpose of recovering the animals stolen from the Spaniards by the Comanches and retaken by the Timpanogos.³²

On November 20, 1805, Alencaster again wrote to the commandant-general informing him that Mestas had returned "without recovering more than nine animals, since the pack mules of which he went in search, as a result of the cruel war which the the Caiguas (Kiowas) were waging against the Yutas Timpanogos, in an attack, had been captured by the Caiguas."³³

These communications suggest more or less continual intercourse between the Spaniards of New Mexico and the Yutas, some of which seems to have been carried on as far as the Timpanogos, that is, to the Utah Lake region of today.

The Arze expedition to Rio Sebero (Sevier River), 1813. Recently I discovered a document in the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, now at Santa Fé, which throws new light upon the activities of the period. It gives an account of a trading expedition to the Timpanogos, and the Bearded Yutas west of the Sevier River in the year 1813. The company consisted of seven men under the command of Mauricio Arze and Lagos García. They left Abiquiú on the sixteenth of March, 1813, and returned to that place after a trip of some four months, on the twelfth of July. On the first of September the governor of New Mexico, having received information regarding the affair, ordered the members of the party to appear before Manuel García as alcalde of the "Villa de Santa Cruz de la Cañada" and report what had taken place on the trip. Between the sixth and tenth of the month affidavits were sworn to by the following five members of the party: Miguel Tenorio, Felipe Gómez, Josef Santiago Vejil, Gabriel Quintana, and Josef Velasques.³⁴

In the main these affidavits duplicate each other, with only here and there a unique detail. None of the accounts give any

³² Alencaster to Commandant-General Salcedo, September 1, 1805 (Ms. Spanish Archives of New Mex., Santa Fé; photographic copy in Bancroft Library; cf. Twitchell, *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, II, 478, no. 1881.)

³³ Alencaster to Commandant-General Salcedo, November 20, 1805. (Ms. Spanish Archives of New Mex., photographic copy in Bancroft Library; cf. Twitchell, *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, II, 487, no. 1925.)

³⁴ The document has no title, but is listed by Twitchell as number 2511 in his *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, II, 577. A photographic copy is in the Bancroft Library.

particulars as to the route followed between Abiquiú and the lake of the Timpanogos, possibly because that route was so well known that nothing needed to be said. The company remained at the lake of the Timpanogos three days carrying on a little trade while waiting for the Indians of two rancherías to come together. When all were assembled a council was held, but, if we may rely upon the statements of the Spaniards in their affidavits, the Indians would trade nothing but Indian slaves, "as they had done on other occasions,"³⁵ the documents add. This the Spaniards claimed they refused to do. Whereupon some of the Indians fell upon and began killing the horses of the Spaniards. Before the chief could quiet his people and stop the slaughter eight horses and a mule had been killed. Warned by this injury the Spaniards collected their remaining horses and, after standing guard over them all night, set out on the following day for Rio Sebero (Sevier River).

Here they met a Yuta of the Sanpuchi (Sanpete) nation who promised to take them to a place where they could trade with a tribe of Yutas as yet unknown to them. Two of the company, Felipe Gómez and Gabriel Quintana, were left in charge of the pack train while the other five, guided by the Sanpuchi, set out to the west. After traveling three days they came upon a tribe of Indians who were characterized as having heavy beards, clearly the bearded Indians of the Dominguez-Escalante journal, whose territory we were there told began at the Rio Santa Isabel (The Sevier of today).³⁶ They were evidently the Sanpuchi or Sanpete Indians as an Indian of that tribe would not be apt to lead the traders to Indians of some other tribe.

Domínguez and Escalante had found these Indians very gentle and affable, but now they met the Spaniards with "their arms in their hands, saying their trade would be arrows." They were finally quieted, however, and arrangements were made to trade on the following day. But in the evening the Spaniards overheard the Indians discussing a plan by which they proposed to kill their visitors. Taking advantage of this information the Spaniards stole away "traveling stealthily all night and day until they reached the place where their companions and pack train were." Thence they took the road to the Rio Grande (Colorado),³⁷ at which place they found the ranchería of Guasache (Wasatch), who was waiting on the road to trade with them "as was his custom."

³⁵ "Como lo abian verificado en otras ocasiones."

³⁶ *Doc. para la hist. de Mex.*, 2 sér. I, 473, 476.

³⁷ The Rio Grande here, and usually during this period, refers to the Colorado, not the Rio Grande del Norte.

At the ranchería of Guasache the party met with the same sort of treatment that they had received on the other portions of their trip. At first they were treated kindly but when they refused to trade for the Indian slaves offered them, the Indians took offense. This time, however, the commandant, having been informed of the extremity of the resentment of the Indians, called his men together and gave them permission to purchase the slaves, "in order," as the affidavits state, "not to receive another injury like the first one." As a result of this decision, twelve slaves were bought, after which, the Spaniards continued their journey with no other incident worthy of note except the loss of a mule and a horse by drowning in crossing the Rio Grande (Colorado).

Besides the slaves mentioned above, the Spaniards collected on their trip a total of one hundred and nine pelts. This, however, was stated to be "but a few." None of the statements tell what kind they were.

That the country over which the company had traveled was fairly well known seems to be implied from the fact that nothing to the contrary is stated and that no difficulties regarding the route are mentioned. The only place where they speak of having had a guide was from the Rio Sebero to the Bearded Indians. Two members of the party, however, understood the language of these Indians sufficiently well to be referred to as interpreters. These Indians, it was stated, were unknown to the traders, which seems to imply that the traders were at least somewhat acquainted with the others whom they visited.

American traders with the Spaniards on the Colorado. By 1824, Americans from Missouri were trapping and trading with the Indians in the mountains along the tributaries of the Colorado and Green rivers, and it is frequently supposed that the Spaniards had given way to the more aggressive traders from the United States. This is hardly a correct statement of the case, however. While it is true that American traders built up an extensive industry on the waters of the Colorado with Santa Fé as a supply base, and that they continued active in that region and from there to California for the next twenty years or more, it is also true that the Spaniards from New Mexico carried on an important trade with the Indians of the same region all during that period. What is more, they resented the American encroachment into this territory as a breach of neutrality, and complained (1828) of the establishment of a fort four days beyond Lake Timpanogos for the beaver trade.³⁸ This was evidently the tem-

³⁸ Bolton, *Guide*, p. 225.

porary post or rendezvous of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette on Bear Lake, 1827-1828.

Continued activity of the Mexicans among the Yutas of the Great Basin. For the next twenty years Santa Fé was a recognized supply base for the Rocky Mountain fur trade. Enterprising Americans, like Antoine Robidoux, carried on an extensive commerce along the tributaries of the Colorado and Green rivers, transporting a large portion of their furs to Santa Fé where they procured their outfits and supplies. Miles M. Goodyear, in 1841, is supposed to have obtained a Mexican grant for the region now known as Ogden, Utah, and to have stocked it as a rancho with sheep, goats, cattle, and horses from New Mexico.³⁹ But not all of the trade fell into the hands of the Americans. Dick Wootton, who was trapping in the Great Basin in 1838, says that he sent a lot of peltry back to Taos with a party of Mexican traders whom he happened to meet there. This is given as a typical case, not at all unusual. These traders, like the ones we have already noted, were more interested in trading for Indian captives and children than for furs.⁴⁰ Even after the Mormons established themselves in the Great Salt Lake Valley companies of Mexican traders continued to frequent that region. Friction between these parties and the Mormon authorities is responsible for a number of documents throwing light on the activities of the Mexican traders of that period. Some of these may here be noted. In the preamble of a law "for the further relief of Indian slaves and prisoners," passed by the Utah legislature January 31, 1852,⁴¹ it was stated that "From time immemorial, the practice of purchasing Indian women and children, of the Utah tribe of Indians

³⁹ O. A. Kennedy, "First building built in Ogden. Story of Miles M. Goodyear" (The Ogden Standard, Ogden, Utah, July 11, 1914). Kennedy quotes freely from old pioneers who arrived in Ogden soon after the purchase of the Goodyear claim by Captain James Brown. One of these was Joseph Wood who is quoted as saying "I cannot recall the amount of stock, horses and cattle and goats. Certainly about 30 horses, 100 cattle, 250 goats, perhaps. The goats were every possible color and shade, some spotted as leopards. They were a pretty sight. We used them for meat and I thought it was the sweetest meat I ever tasted." James M. Brown, the son of Captain Brown, is quoted as saying: "When we got through to the fort that fall [1848] we found father and my older brothers living in the cabins at the fort. They had got about 50 cattle from Goodyear and there were 40 milk cows that were milking . . . There were about 100 Mexican goats and 20 Mexican sheep, the kind with long straight wool. There were more than 50 horses, mostly of Spanish and Indian breed."

⁴⁰ H. L. Conard, **Uncle Dick Wootton**, p. 81.

⁴¹ Utah. Laws, statutes, etc. **Acts, resolutions, and memorials** (Great Salt Lake City, 1855), p. 171.

by Mexican traders, has been indulged in, and carried on by those respective people, until the Indians consider it an allowable traffic, and frequently offer their prisoners or children for sale;"

A little over a year later, under date of April 23, 1853, Brigham Young, as governor of Utah, saw fit to issue the following proclamation:⁴² "Whereas it is made known to me by reliable information, from affidavits, and various other sources, that there is in this Territory a horde of Mexicans, or outlandish men, who are infesting the settlements, stirring up the Indians to make aggressions upon the inhabitants, and who are also furnishing the Indians with guns, ammunition, etc., contrary to the laws of this Territory and the laws of the United States:

"And whereas it is evident that it is the intention of these Mexicans or foreigners to break the laws of this Territory and the United States, utterly regardless of every restriction, furnishing Indians with guns and powder, whenever and wherever it suits their designs, convenience, or purposes:

"Therefore, I, Brigham Young, Governor and Superintendent of Indian affairs for the Territory of Utah, in order to preserve peace, quell the Indians and secure the lives and property of the citizens of the Territory, hereby order and direct as follows:

"1st. That a small detachment consisting of thirty men, under the charge of Captain Wall, proceed south through the entire extent of the settlements reconnoitering the country and directing the inhabitants to be on their guard against any sudden surprise.

* * * * *

"3rd. The officer and party hereby sent upon this service are hereby authorized and directed to arrest and keep in close custody every strolling Mexican party, and those associating with them—and leave them safely guarded at the different points of settlement to await further orders.

* * * * *

"5th. All Mexicans now in the Territory are required to remain quiet in the settlements and not attempt to leave under any consideration, until further advised; and the officers of the Terri-

⁴² This proclamation appeared in the *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City) of April 30, 1853, (see Bancroft, *History of Utah*, p. 476) and from that was translated and published in an extended editorial, by *La Crónica de Nueva York* from which it was copied by *El Siglo Diez y Nueve (Mexico)* in its issue of July 16, 1853. It is reproduced in O. F. Whitney, *Hist. of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1892), I. 512. On July 20, 1853, *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* devoted its entire front page to the subject in opposition to the action taken by the Governor of Utah. This is especially interesting in view of the fact that New Mexico was at that time United States territory rather than that of Mexico.

tory are hereby directed to keep them in safe custody, treating them with kindness and supplying their necessary wants”

Slave buying expedition to the Great Basin led by Pedro León, 1851. A single specific case will serve to illustrate the practice which seems, from the documents quoted, to have been a rather common custom. On November 15, 1851, the *Deseret News* called attention to the fact that one Pedro León and a party of about twenty Mexicans were at Manti in Sanpete Valley for the purpose of trading horses for Indian children and that he had a license dated Santa Fé, August 14, 1851, and signed by Governor James S. Calhoun.⁴³ León and seven of his companions were arrested and tried before the Justice of the Peace at Manti during the winter of 1851-52. The case later came before Zerubbabel Snow as judge of the First District court. In summing up the case, Snow made the following statement: “In September last, twenty-eight Spaniards left New Mexico on a trading expedition with the Utah Indians, in their various localities in New Mexico and Utah. Twenty-one of the twenty-eight were severally interested in the expedition. The residue were servants. Among this company were the Spaniards against whom these suits were brought. Before they left, Pedro León obtained a license from the governor of New Mexico to trade on his own account with the Utah Indians, in all their various localities. Another member of the company also had a license given to blank persons by the Governor of New Mexico. The residue were without license. They proceeded on their route until they arrived near the Rio Grande, where they exchanged with the Indians some goods for horses and mules. With these horses and mules, being something more than one hundred, they proceeded to Green River, in this territory, where they sent some five or six of their leading men to see Governor Young, and exhibit to him their license; and as the Spanish witness said if that was not good here, then to get from him another license. Governor Young not being at home, but gone south, they proceeded after and found him November 3rd at Sanpete Valley. Here they exhibited to the Governor their license, and informed him they wished to sell their horses and mules to the Utah Indians, and buy Indian children to be taken to New Mexico. Governor Young then informed them that their license did not authorize them to trade with the Indians in Utah. They then sought one from him, but he refused it, for the reason that they wanted to buy Indian children for slaves. The Spaniards then promised him they would not trade with the Indians but go immediately home. Twenty of the number, with about three-fourths of the horses and mules, left

⁴³ Bancroft, *Hist. of Utah*. p. 475. Whitney, *Hist. of Utah*, I, 508-510.

pursuant to this promise and have not been heard from since. The eight who were left behind are the men who are parties to these proceedings.”⁴⁴

Snow decided against the eight defendants, and the Indian slaves in their possession were liberated and the Mexicans sent away.

Spaniards on Spokane River. New Mexicans, of course, were, at this time, United States citizens, but that they were regarded still as Mexicans in language and sentiment not only by the Mormons but by themselves and United States government agents is indicated by an incident narrated by Lieutenant R. Saxton in his “Report of the Route from the Columbia Valley to Fort Owen and thence to Fort Benton,” in 1853. When in the vicinity of Spokane River in the northeastern part of the present state of Washington, Saxton found the Indians suspicious and almost inclined to be hostile. As an explanation he recorded in his journal under date of August 2, 1853: “The Indians told me that a Spaniard had been along a few days before, and told them that a large body of American soldiers were coming to cut them off and take possession of their homes.”⁴⁵ It is not stated that this Spaniard was from New Mexico, but it may, perhaps, be safely presumed that such was the case. Incidentally, this indicates the extent to which activity of Mexican traders was carried as late as the middle of the nineteenth century.

JEDEDIAH S. SMITH ON THE SALT DESERT TRAIL

By Charles Kelly

West of Great Salt Lake lies Great Salt Lake Desert, a barren and level plain extending approximately 100 miles north and south, and 75 miles in width. In geologically recent times the lake covered this whole area; but evaporation has gradually removed the water from this older and larger part, leaving the old lake bottom exposed, with the salt formerly contained in its waters spread out over the surface.

No streams flow into this great salt basin surrounded on every side by volcanic hills and granite mountains; and around its borders are to be found only a half dozen small springs of fresh water. On the eastern “shore” of this old lake bed only two insignificant springs are to be found in a distance of over a hundred

⁴⁴ Whitney, *Hist. of Utah*, I. 510- 511.

⁴⁵ U. S. Engineer dept., *Reports of explorations and surveys to ascertain the most practical and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*. I. 256 (U. S. 33d cong., 2d sess., Senate, Ex. doc. 78).

miles, and the country approaching from both the east and the west is almost equally destitute of water.

The surface of this desert is composed of the silt and clay left by the ancient lake, and the whole basin, which is without drainage, seems to be supplied with subterranean moisture. This underground supply, aided by the melting of snow accumulated during the winter, keeps the surface constantly damp the year round, even in the very hottest weather. The salt-impregnated mud, which is bottomless, makes travel across this desert in wheeled vehicles, almost impossible. Add to this difficulty its great width of 75 miles without water, and it can be easily understood why Great Salt Lake Desert was such a serious obstacle in the path of westward emigration in pioneer times.

Across this great stretch of salt-mud and waterless desert passed the Donner party in 1846, following the trail of Lansford W. Hastings, for whom the Hastings Cutoff was named. The experiences of this company of emigrants and their tragic fate in the Sierra Nevada Mountains is comparatively well known. It is also well known in Utah that they were compelled to abandon some of their wagons in the Salt Desert.

It is generally believed that the Donner party was the only emigrant company who ever attempted to cross the Salt Desert in early days. This, however, is not the case, since history records at least ten different crossings before the route was finally abandoned in 1851; and it is with these little known experiences of exploring and emigrant parties which this series of articles will deal.

A glance at the map of Utah will show that Great Salt Lake and the desert to the west of it presented great natural obstacles to emigrant travel bound for California in early days. In order to avoid these obstacles it was necessary to make a long detour to the north around the lake and down the Humboldt river. It was in attempting to find a shorter route that Hastings crossed the Salt Desert with wagons and oxen in 1846, passing to the south of Great Salt Lake, the results of which will be recounted later.

The first white man known to have crossed Great Salt Lake Desert was Jedediah S. Smith;¹ and before we recount the difficulties of the emigrants with wagons, it might be well to hear his story.

In July, 1826, General Ashley, who had made his fortune trapping in the Great Basin, sold out his interests to Smith, Jackson and Sublette. Jedediah S. Smith, who was a man of imagination and a born explorer, decided to find a route through

¹Ashley-Smith Explorations—Dale.

the mountains to California, thinking it would offer a nearer market for his furs. He also hoped to locate the fabled Buena-ventura river and open up new and rich trapping grounds. With these objects in view he set out with a small company of men from the Great Salt Lake on August 22, 1826—four years more than a century ago.

After various experiences he reached San Gabriel Mission, near Los Angeles, on November 26, having discovered a new route to the coast which is approximately the route of the modern highway between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Upon arriving at Los Angeles Smith and his party were forcibly detained by the Mexican authorities, but after a few weeks were released after promising to leave Mexican territory at once and by the way they had come.

Jedediah S. Smith, being by nature an explorer, did not relish the idea of retracing his steps, so instead of returning directly to Salt Lake, he took his men north, trapping as he went, until they were far from any Mexican settlement. Here they spent the winter. In May of the following year, Smith made an attempt to cross the Sierras on his return east, in the neighborhood of the Stanislaus river. On account of the great depth of snow on the mountains he failed in his first attempt, losing several horses. In his second attempt he was accompanied by only two men, with seven horses and two mules, but succeeded in crossing on the hard-packed snow in eight days, with the loss of only two horses and one mule.

Concerning his journey from the eastern slope of the Sierras to the Salt Lake we have only a very little information, being that contained in a letter written July 17, 1827, on Bear Lake, probably near Laketown, Utah, to General Wm. Clark, Superintendent of Indian affairs, as follows:

"After traveling twenty days from the east side of Mount Joseph, (Probably Mount Stanislaus) I struck the southwest corner of the Great Salt Lake, traveling over a country completely barren and destitute of game. We frequently traveled without water, sometimes for two days, over sandy deserts, where there was no sign of vegetation, and when we found water in some of the rocky hills, we most generally found some Indians who appeared the most miserable of the human race, having nothing to subsist on (nor any clothing), except grass seed, grasshoppers, etc. When we arrived at the Salt Lake, we had but one horse and one mule remaining, which were so feeble and poor that they could scarce carry the little camp equipage which I had along; the balance of my horses I was compelled to eat as they gave out."

From this description, brief as it is, one who is familiar with the desert can trace his route with reasonable accuracy. In order to strike the southwest corner of the Salt Lake, coming from the west, it would be necessary to cross the southern end of the Salt Desert. The "country completely barren and destitute of game," and the "sandy deserts where there was no sign of vegetation" describe this desert exactly.

There is another clue, however, which helps to locate his route a little more accurately. Isaac K. Russell, in "Hidden Heroes of the Rockies," says:

"For years after Smith's journey, the Piute Indians of Skull Valley, Utah, repeated the tradition that the first white men they ever saw were three who staggered, almost naked, in from the western desert, and were half crazy from breathing alkali dust."

Mr. Russell obtained this information many years ago from old mountain men and trappers who still remember the stories of early days and who were well acquainted with these Indians. I think it may be considered reliable.

Skull Valley extends north and south for a distance of thirty or forty miles, its northern end opening on Great Salt Lake and its southern end separated from the Salt Desert to the west by only a low range of hills. Smith and his two companions could have struck the southwest corner of Salt Lake after crossing the desert, by no other route than through Skull Valley, unless they crossed from Pilot Peak, which is many miles too far north. From Smith's own account he did not follow the Humboldt river, the route later taken by the emigrants, and therefore would have struck the desert nearer its southern end. He most probably followed near to the line of the Beckwith survey of 1854, which is practically identical with what is now known as the Goodyear or Sieberling Cutoff, of the old Lincoln Highway, in which case he would have left Goshute Springs, Utah, on the western edge of the desert, traveled 20 miles to Granite mountain, about 30 miles to the southern end of Skull Valley, and from there nearly twenty miles to the springs, where he probably encountered the Indians who remembered seeing three men come in famished from the desert. There is one small spring in Granite mountain which he may have found. But even if he obtained water there, it was still two day's hard travel to the next water in upper Skull Valley.

It is certain that Smith did not cross the desert over the route of the present Victory Highway, since there is no water within a day's journey of Wendover on the western side, the present water supply being piped 22 miles. Besides, if he had used that route, he would most likely have made mention of the great salt beds lying just east of Wendover.

Taking into consideration the nature of the country, the information in Smith's letter, and the story of the Indians, I believe it can be stated with a reasonable degree of accuracy, that Jedediah S. Smith crossed the Great Salt Desert over approximately the route of the present Goodyear or Sieberling Cutoff of the original Lincoln Highway, (now abandoned), running between Orr's Ranch in Skull Valley and Gold Hill, western Utah.

The feat of crossing this great unknown country between the Sierras and the Salt Lake, with only two companions, has never been fully appreciated by historians, partly because Smith himself makes such brief mention of it, but principally because of the historians' lack of knowledge concerning that section of the west. Few persons today—few even in Utah—have ever seen the Great Salt Desert or the country which lies to the west of it. The desert between the Sierras and the Sink of the Humboldt is desolate enough, dangerous enough, even for the hardest explorer. But the Great Salt Desert, stretching for 75 miles without water and without any vegetation whatever, reflecting from its salt-encrusted surface all the heat of the summer sun, confusing the traveler with its beautiful mirages and choking him with its salt-laden winds; enmeshing his feet in its bottomless mire and sapping his energy with its shifting sand dunes, presents the most desolate and dangerous stretch of desert in America, with the exception of Death Valley itself.

Jedediah S. Smith, crossing this desert for the first time, with no knowledge of what lay before him, achieved one of the greatest single exploits in the whole history of western exploration.

The next article of this series will deal with the Bartleson-Bidwell party of 1841, the first to cross the Salt Desert with wagons.

AMERICAN POSTS (Continued)

By Edgar M. Ledyard

Hindman, Fort. ("Arkansas Post"). Left bank of the Arkansas River; fifty miles above the mouth, in the southern part of Arkansas County. Built by the Confederates. Arkansas.

Holabird Quartermaster Intermediate Depot. Five and one-half miles southeast of Baltimore, Maryland. Maryland.

Holmes, Fort. On Mackinac Island, north of Fort Mackinac. Michigan.

Holt, Fort. Temporary work at the mouth of the Ohio, opposite Cairo, Illinois. Kentucky.

Hook, Fort. Temporary fort in Florida War, eleven miles south of Fort Wheelock on Orange Lake, and 17 miles west of Fort King. Florida.

Hoover, Fort. In Rockingham County, at Harrisonburg. Virginia.

Hope, Fort. Canada.

Hoskins, Fort. (Military). On left bank of the south fork of Yamhill River, present town of Hoskins, Benton County. Oregon.

Hot Springs Army and Navy Hospital, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Houston, Fort Sam. Fort Sam Houston was founded in 1865; it is the headquarters of the Eighth Corps Area. Ordinarily about 12,000 troops are barracked at Sam Houston and every branch of the service is represented—infantry, cavalry, artillery, tank and transport. The original size of the post was about one fourth of the present area of 1,000 acres. In addition, the Government has the use of 20,000 acres nearby for field maneuvers. Fort Sam Houston is one of the most desirable stations, among the various posts, in the United States. The Alamo, located in the business center of San Antonio, is of great interest to Americans. The Alamo was built about 1718. On March 6, 1836, while garrisoned by Texans, it was attacked by General Santa Ana of the Mexican Army. All but a few of the garrison were killed; among them were Travis, Crocket and Bowie, of frontier fame. Those who surrendered were immediately put to death by General Santa Ana. Albert Sidney Johnson, Robert E. Lee, George H. Thomas, W. H. Carter, Henry T. Allen and many other noted soldiers have been on duty at Fort Sam Houston. The Fort and military reservation are located near the City of San Antonio, Texas.

Howard, Fort. Seventeen miles southeast of Baltimore; established in 1900. The reservation covers 149 acres and the post is situated at North Point on Patapsco River. In 1914 four companies of Coast Artillery were stationed there. Maryland.

Howard, Fort. One of the defenses before Petersburg. Virginia.

Howard, Fort, on left bank of Fox River, 14 miles from its mouth at Green Bay, Brown County. Wisconsin.

Howell, Fort, in the vicinity of Hilton Head, due east from Fort Wells. South Carolina.

Howes' House (1810-11), Hudson's Bay Company Post. Montana.

Hoyle, Fort, at Edgewood. Maryland.

Huachuca, Fort. Located in Cochise County, Arizona, 22 miles from Tombstone, Arizona, near the southern border. Arizona.

Hudson Battery. On Staten Island; right bank of Narrows, entrance to New York Harbor. New York.

Hudson, Camp. At second crossing of the San Pedro, 34 miles from its mouth on the Rio Grande. Texas.

Huger, Fort, at the junction of the Blakely and Apalache Rivers, northwest of Spanish Fort. Built by the Confederates to command Blakely River and nearby points. Alabama.

Hugh, Camp, Bibb County. Alabama.

Hughes, Camp, Manitoba. Canada.

Hughes, Fort, on the island of Pulo Caballo, Manila Bay. Philippine Islands.

Hulbert, Fort. Temporary fort established during Florida War, about 13 miles from coast, and midway between Forts Andrews and Frank Brooke. Florida.

Hull, Fort. In central part of Macon County, five miles due south from Tuskegee, near the Calleebee Creek, tributary of the Tallapoosa River. Alabama.

Humboldt, Fort. The site of this old post is at Bucksport, about three miles south of Eureka, in Humboldt County. The site of the post is well defined and well-known to residents in the vicinity. Some of the old buildings were standing in 1924. In August, 1853, U. S. Grant was promoted to the grade of full captain in the Fourth United States Infantry, at Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory; in October of the same year, Captain Grant was ordered to Fort Humboldt and took command of Company "F." While a captain at Fort Humboldt, Grant and three other officers leased the Union Hotel on Kearny Street, San Francisco, at \$500.00 per month, with the idea of subletting it. This enterprise was a financial failure. When Grant was at Fort Humboldt, the nearest town was Eureka, three miles north. The principal citizen of Eureka at that time was James F. Ryan who surveyed the town, operated a sawmill and afterwards became a brigadier general of the militia and a member of the California Senate. Grant and Ryan were great friends, according to Albert D. Richardson, one of Grant's biographers. Richardson states that Ryan kept a barrel of whiskey on tap and that his table was loaded with local game and bread made from Genesee, New York flour. Visitors to Old Fort Humboldt are still shown a well-worn path, said to have been established by Grant while making pedestrian trips from the fort to a nearby saloon. Grant called the Humboldt Bay clams "a first-rate substitute for gutta percha oysters." California.

Humphreys, Camp, (Engineers), Accotink. Virginia.

Humphreys, Fort. Fifteen miles southwest of Washington, D. C., in Fairfax County, on the Potomac River, at Accotink. Virginia.

Hunt, Fort. In the District of Washington; 11½ miles south of Washington, D. C. Virginia.

Hunter, Fort. Temporary fort in Florida War, right bank of St. John's River, about 1½ miles south of Pilatka. Florida.

Hunter, Fort, Montgomery County. New York.

Hunter, Fort, Daughin County. Pennsylvania.

Huntington Smith, Fort. One of the Civil War defenses of Knoxville, east of the city and north of the Holston River. Tennessee.

Hyndshaw, Fort. On January 12, 1756, Benjamin Franklin issued instructions from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, addressed to Captain Vanetta of Upper Smithfield Township. Captain Vanetta was directed to raise a company of soldiers of not less than 30 able men to be engaged for a period of one month. The Province had no money to furnish arms or blankets and each man who enlisted was directed to bring his own equipment, for the use of which he would be allowed \$1.00, for the entire period of enlistment. Captain Vanetta was directed to keep a journal in which all the activities of the men, including desertions or deaths were to be reported. The men were advised that if attacked by the Indians, they were to kill and scalp them; also that they would be paid \$40.00 for each scalp brought in. Drunkenness and immorality were forbidden. Some fifty soldiers signed the following obligation:

“Jany. 12th, 1756.

“We, the Subscribers, do hereby engage ourselves to Serve as Soldiers in his Majesty's Service, under the command of Captain John Vanetta, for the space of one Month, and whoever of us shall get drunk, desert, or prove cowardly in Time of Action, or disobedient to our Officers, shall forfeit his Pay. This Agreement we make in Consideration of being allow'd at the rate of Six Dollars per Month, Wages, one Dollar for the Use of a Gun and Blanket, to each Man who shall furnish himself with them, and the Provisions and Rum mentioned in a Paper hereunto annex'd.” (Penn. Arch., ii, p. 547.)

This was one of the shortest enlistments in the history of this country. Henshaw was one of the Lieutenants and from the inclusion of his name in the records, the name, Henshaw, q. v., may have become confused with Hyndshaw. When the fort was completed it was about 70 feet “each way” and very “slightly Staccaded.” The bastions were later rebuilt and all trees and other obstacles cleared for a distance of 300 yards around the post. Pennsylvania.

Independence, Fort, in Owens River Valley. California.

Independence, Fort, (Castle William). On Castle Island. Built on former site of Castle William at the inner entrance to Boston Harbor. Massachusetts.

Independence, Fort. On south bank and at mouth of East Creek, Orwell County. Vermont.

Indianapolis Arsenal, Indianapolis, Marion County. Indiana.

Indianhead Naval Station, Maryland. Washington, D. C.

Inge, Fort. Left bank of Big Leona River, about 5 miles below its source at Leona Spring, in Uvalde County. Texas.

Iona Island Naval Magazine, Iona Island. New York.

Jackson Barracks, on left bank of the Mississippi, three miles below New Orleans. Louisiana.

Jackson, Camp. Six miles east of Columbia. South Carolina.

Jackson, Fort. Temporary work, left bank of the Coosa, two miles northeast from the junction of Alabama and Tallapoosa River. Formerly Fort Thoulouse. Alabama.

Jackson, Fort. Temporary fort, established during Florida War, 13 miles southwest from Columbus, on the road to Tallahassee. Florida.

Jackson, Fort, on right bank of Savannah River, three miles below Savannah. Georgia.

Jackson, Fort. On right bank of the Mississippi at Plaquemines Bend, nearly opposite Fort St. Phillip, and 70 miles below New Orleans, at Triumph, Plaquemines County. Some writers give the distance below New Orleans as 78 miles. Fort Jackson was built during the years 1824 to 1832 and enlarged and repaired in 1841. The State authorities of Louisiana seized Fort Jackson and Fort St. Phillip in 1860 and fortified them strongly. These forts were captured on April 28, 1862, by Commodore Porter of the Federal Navy. Louisiana.

Jackson, Fort, (1833). North bank of Milk River. Montana.

Jackson, Fort, St. Lawrence County. New York.

Jackson, Fort. On James Island. The first independence flag displayed in South Carolina was at the taking of Fort Jackson, September 13, 1775. It was blue with a white crescent in one corner. This was the flag rescued by Sergeant Jasper in the attack on Fort Moultrie on June 28, 1776. South Carolina.

Jackson, Fort. One of the Civil War defenses of Washington, D. C.; south side of the Potomac, at Long Bridge. Virginia.

Jackson, Fort. At Mineral Point. Built during the Black Hawk War. Wisconsin.

Jacqua, Camp. In northwestern California on Fort Humboldt and Fort Gaston Road. California.

James, Fort, on right bank of Alatomaha River, two miles above the mouth of Beard's Creek. Also called Old Fort. Georgia.

James, Fort. On right bank of Ogeechee River. Built by the Confederates. Georgia.

James, Fort. About the year 1664 the Dutch Settlement at Fort New Amsterdam was captured by the English and the name of the Fort was changed to James (See Fort William Henrik). New York.

James, Fort. At junction of Firesteel Creek with the James River, Alexandria, Hanson County. South Dakota.

Jameson Battery. One of the defenses of Washington on right bank of Eastern Branch. District of Columbia.

Jasper House. This post was situated at the outlet of Lake Jasper, an expansion of Athabasca River. It was an important trade outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company on the east side of the Rocky Mountains between the eastern ends of the Athabasca and the Yellow Head passes. It was named in honor of Jasper Haws, a clerk in the Northwest Company. This post was built about 1800. The name "Jasper House" is preserved in the name of a station on the Canadian National Railroad in this vicinity. Canada.

Jay, Fort, now called Fort Columbus. On Governors Island, New York Harbor. (See Governors Island). A United States military post, established in 1806. The area of Governors Island, on which this fort stands has been increased by refilling the shallow waters near its shores. The island is so named because it was a perquisite of the royal governors, from which it derived its name. Governors Island has been used as a quarantine station and garrisoned by American and British troops at various times. The Island was deeded to the United States in 1800 and a permanent fortification was built upon the site of the original Fort Jay which was an early earthwork. In 1812, the "South Battery" was added. Extensive improvements were begun in 1901. These included docks, warehouses, barracks and officers' quarters. New York.

Jefferson Barracks, on right bank of the Mississippi, below St. Louis. This post was established by Order No. 66 on October 23, 1826. It is located near the city of St. Louis and one of our most important army posts. Jefferson Davis, Lee, Johnson and many noted officers have been stationed here. Blackhawk was confined here. Washington Irving visited Blackhawk here and Catlin painted Indian pictures at this post. In South St. Louis; ten miles south of St. Louis. Missouri.

Jefferson, Fort. On Tortugas Island. Garden Key, Dry Tortugas, in the Gulf of Mexico. Florida.

Jefferson, Fort. On the Mississippi River; longitude 89.54 west, latitude 36.36 north. Kentucky.

(Continued)

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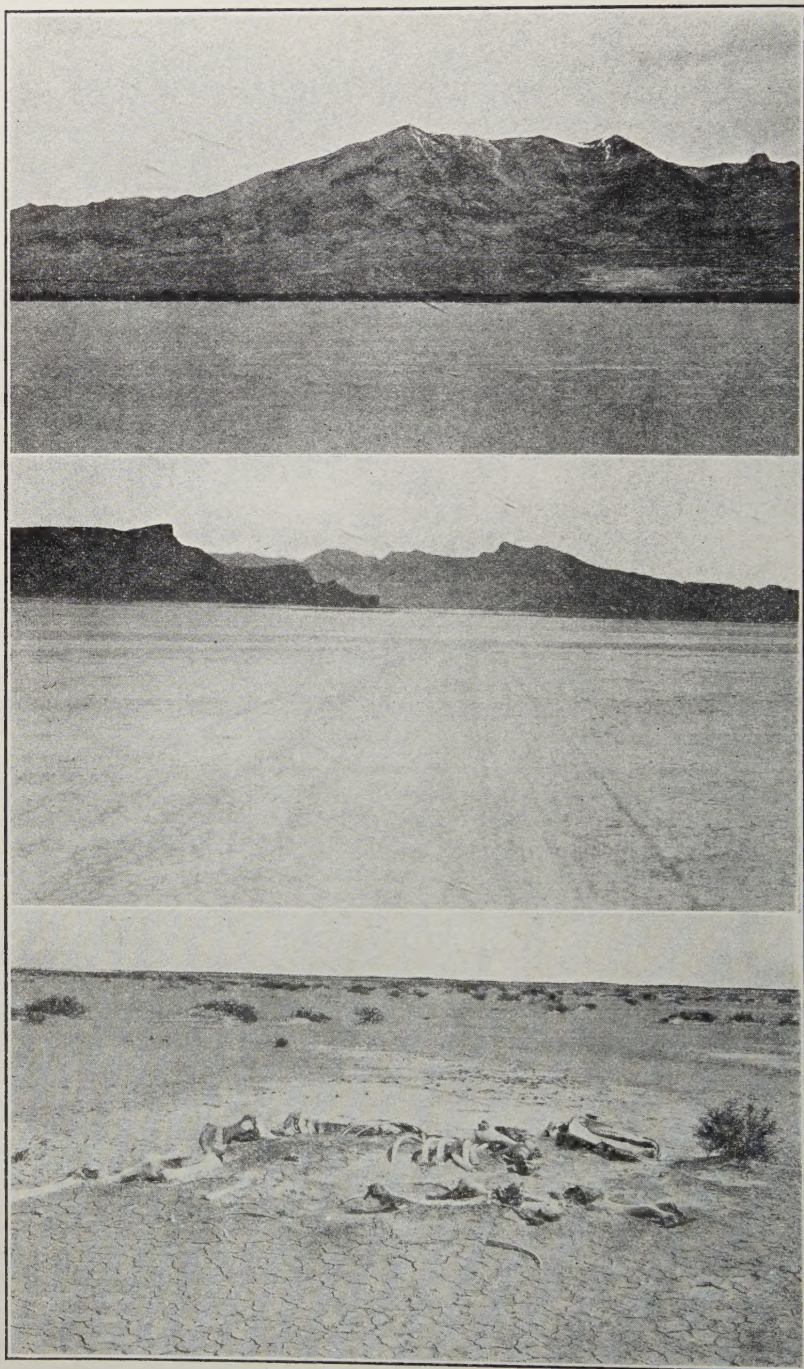
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Pilot Peak, and the Desert Trail